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Abdullah-Smoking

ABDULLAH LAUNCHES NATIONWIDE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi launched a nationwide anti-smoking campaign today and called for stricter enforcement of the law to prohibit the sale of cigarettes to those under-18.

Abdullah said that the anti-smoking habit should be instilled among the young right from school to ensure that they were aware of the negative effects of smoking to prevent them growing into adults who were smokers.

"My message (to our children) is, take care, don't be easily influenced into taking up smoking by your peers. Don't be ashamed to say no.

"The adults too should stop smoking as it will not do them any good,"

he said when launching the campaign which carries the slogan 'Say No!' at the Putrajaya Convention Centre here.

Abdullah advised parents who smoke to try to stop the habit as it serves as a bad example to their children.

Abdullah said that the role of teachers and parents was vital in guiding the younger generation to stay away from cigarettes as it would affect their studies and their health.

Statistics reveal that about 8 per cent of the estimated 4.6 million smokers in Malaysia represents students. It was found that 50 to 60 teenagers start smoking every day.

The government has allocated RM20 million a year for the next five years for the anti-smoking campaign to prove its commitment to curb the smoking habit among Malaysians.

Abdullah said that he and former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had managed to stay away from cigarettes altogether.

"But I dare not say that anyone who does not smoke will become Prime Minister," he said in jest at the launching, attended by some 3,000 students.

The Prime Minister said he hoped that by not smoking, the younger

generation would emerge as outstanding students, sportsmen and also workers and leaders who could contribute towards the nation's success.

Later, asked at a media conference on the rampant sale of cigarettes to teenagers, he said: "We have to improve our enforcement to be more effective."

Abdullah said that the campaign was not only aimed at reducing the number of smokers, it was also to discourage non-smokers to remain that way.

"The campaign is for all levels of society and students are the main target," he said.

He said that the anti-smoking campaign should continue to be held to ensure that there were fewer smokers in the country.

"If we were to continue with the campaign, like prohibiting smoking in certain places by putting up signs, we hope the number of smokers among Malaysians will be reduced eventually," he said.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng told the media conference that the persuasion approach would be adopted in the campaign through direct education based on scientific facts.

Earlier in his speech, Chua said that women and teenagers account for an increasing number of smokers as a result of promotion by tobacco companies in expanding their respective marketing network.

"Unfortunately, smoking is regarded as stylish and in keeping with the lifestyle of a section of the society.

"It's true that the public must be explained clearly pertaining to smoking so that they can make a wise choice when faced with the pressure to smoke," he said.

A series of anti-smoking advertisements will be aired by the electronic media to outline the negative effects of the smoking habit like lung cancer, heart disease and stroke which may lead to death.

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